

THE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

who was crucified ; the flowers of the forest had wonderful healing properties, "all evident signs that here flourished a continual spring of Paradise." Angels had descended in human form to eat with the hermits in their refectory, or to succour them in their need ; Christ Himself had appeared in the wood to confirm the young friar, Giovanni di Guccio, in his vocation ; but fiends lurked in it, ready to ensnare the souls of the unwary, even as the young Sienese knight, Ambrogio Sansedoni, walking heedlessly under the ilexes, had been confronted with what seemed a beautiful girl bound by two ruffians to a tree, who was only revealed in her true nature at the sign of the Cross.

The great days of the convent, however, were a thing of the past, although the house was still ruled by Fra Niccolo Tini, the prior whose sweetness of disposition, boundless humility and charity, are so lovingly extolled by his novice, Filippo Agazzari. Both Fra Niccolo Tini and Fra Filippo must have been living at the convent during the whole time of Catherine's life ; but she appears to have had no dealings with the former (to whom she refers indirectly only in one letter), nor does the latter, in his fascinating *Assempri*, ever make any mention of her or any of her followers. It is, indeed, somewhat startling to find a contemporary Sienese, evidently of holy life and devout conversation, who must have frequently seen Catherine, or, at least, have heard all about her, in after years picturing the religious and social life of his day as though no such person had ever existed.¹ There was evidently a party opposed to Catherine in the convent. It is, at least, certain that none of the friars in Lecceto who now became Catherine's disciples—William Flete, Felice de' Tancredi (known as Fra Felice da Massa), Antonio da Nizza, or Giovanni Tantucci himself—make any appearance in Fra Filippo's pages,

¹ Fra Niccolò Tini (said to have been a Marescotti) was prior of Lecceto from 1332 till 1388. His life is related in Fra Filippo's *dssemprio* 4.1. Filippo entered under him as a novice in 1353, began to write his *Auempro* in 1397, and was elected prior in 1398. Giovanni Tantucci (who died in 1391) apparently succeeded Fra Niccolò as prior. Cf. Carpellini, *Git Aswnpri di Fra Filippo da Siena*, pp. xxvi., xxvii., and Landucci, *Sacra Leccetana Selva*, pp. 103-109,